



South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Aberdeen, South Dakota

For over one hundred years the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired has provided educational services and programs to students, parents, and local school districts.

From the very beginning, the emphasis of instruction was to provide students with vision loss an equal opportunity for an education. In addition to academics, students are taught the skills that help them be successful at work, at home, and in the community.



Ribbon-cutting for new playground

Today, the SDSBVI not only provides an educational program for blind and visually impaired students on the campus in Aberdeen, but also serves students in local schools statewide. As the vision specialists for the state, SDSBVI personnel do evaluations, provide books and classroom materials, conduct awareness and training programs, and provide consultation in areas ranging from preschool intervention to technology and transition.

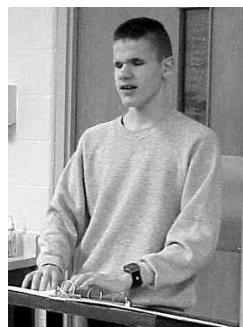
The South Dakota School for the Blind was opened on March 1, 1900 in Gary, South Dakota, under the jurisdiction of the Board of Charities and Corrections. On July 1, 1945 the school was placed under the governance of the South Dakota

Board of Regents. In 1959, the Legislature appropriated funds for construction of a new school in Aberdeen near Northern State University. Classes began in the new building on September 18, 1961. The name of the school was changed in 1970 to the South Dakota School for the Visually Handicapped. In 1979, the mission of the school was expanded to include “deaf-blind” students as well as those who were blind or visually impaired. On July 1, 1999 the school’s name was changed to the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SDSBVI).

The school is accredited by the State of South Dakota and is in compliance with state and federal laws and regulations governing special education. The school has been accredited by the National Accreditation Council for Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped since 1980. In 1994, the SDSBVI became the first school in the state to be accredited by the North Central Association in the Special Function Schools category.

On Campus Program

The SDSBVI places strong emphasis on involvement in the wider community. The school works with the Aberdeen public and parochial schools to have students take classes with their sighted peers. This is done at the pre-school, elementary, junior high, and high school levels. In addition, the Hub Area Multi-District Vocational Center, Aberdeen Adjustment Training Center and Northern State University have provided opportunities for expanded educational opportunities. Community based education, recreation, and employment experiences help students to acquire skills that will last a lifetime.



The South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired provides an academic program for students from kindergarten through high school. In addition to the subjects normally taught in public schools, special emphasis is given to adapting teaching materials and methods to meet the unique needs of blind learners. Teaching the Expanded Core Curriculum of blindness skills is particularly important. Braille, orientation and mobility, daily living skills, low vision

utilization, assistive technology, social skills, recreation, and career awareness are a regular part of this expanded curriculum. Older students spend time living in on-campus apartments to perfect their skills of independence. A completely individualized education program (IEP) is designed annually for each student.

Parents, students, our vision specialists and local school district representatives are all involved in this process.

During June and July, enrolled students can continue their programs to prevent regression of skills. Students from public school programs can use this time to work on the specialized skills in the Expanded Core Curriculum, which may not be available during the regular school year.

Outreach Program

The SDSVBI provides service to blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind students statewide through evaluation, consultation, staff development and shared resources.

Multidisciplinary evaluations conducted by the SDSBVI staff are available for students enrolled in public school programs at no cost. The team of vision specialists evaluates the child's strengths and needs and makes specific educational recommendations.

Outreach Vision Consultants travel the entire state to work with parents and school district personnel. They provide information on appropriate teaching methods and classroom adaptations, loan equipment and teaching materials, provide training for students and staff, and generally serve as a support for parents and teachers.

The *Transition Specialist* works with students, parents, local schools and adult service providers (especially Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired) to develop realistic post high school plans and ensure that the student has the experiences needed to adequately prepare them for further education, vocational training or employment.



Martin Pfotenhauer teaches student how to use his cane.

SDSBVI personnel provide staff development and community presentations on a variety of topics related to blindness. Increasing public awareness of vision loss and the potential of blind people is part of our mission. Cooperative efforts with Northern State University have made it possible to develop on-line courses for teachers and paraprofessionals that can be accessed on the Internet.

The SDSBVI professional library collection and specialized materials are available for interlibrary loan. The collection may be accessed on the SDLN.

Any student, under the age of 21 who has a vision loss that makes it difficult or impossible for him or her to carry on satisfactory classwork, is eligible for services from the SDSBVI. The services provided are determined by the individual child's needs and may include evaluation, consultation services or placement at the school in Aberdeen. The SDSBVI serves day students and has a residential program for students



who do not live within easy driving distance. All services provided by the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired are without charge to local schools or parents. Out-of-state students can be served on a tuition basis.

We encourage you to visit the school when you are in Aberdeen. We would be happy to give you a tour and talk about our services.

Toll-Free Number: 1-888-275-3814

Internet Home Page: www.sdsbvi.sdbor.edu